

## THE SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

### Interview #5

Thursday, June 14, 1990

**ELSON:** I guess you realize, for the record I should say, I'm really doing this right off of the seat of my pants. I wish I had an outline of events going chronologically. It might help my memory a little bit. Some things I remember real well, and others are sort of vague. I was talking to Mary [Frye] the other day, I let her read some of the interviews, and she reminded me of a couple of things. It's amazing how you forget certain things. I guess the great thing about particularly oral history, but history in general, is that your view of the world is probably as good as anyone else's. It's maybe a different opinion, but when you get enough people talking on the same subject, maybe you can see the truth come out somewhere. But, anyhow, that's enough of that. I don't know, where do you want to begin today?

**RITCHIE:** Last week you were talking about your suspicions about eavesdropping, wiretapping, and plants on Capitol Hill. Darrell St. Claire had mentioned some of that in his interview, but I wondered if you could elaborate on what your impressions and suspicions were about that?

**ELSON:** Well, it bothered me, going way back to when I first came back here. I think it started more with the FBI, having access to information that I didn't think we should have access to. I think I've told you why we were so close to the FBI, and I was particularly close to it, because of my two brothers, and then the senator and all that. I don't know when it was that I started figuring out—I think I told you about the incident when I first came back here of thinking that I wasn't prepared for this because when you called an executive branch department someone would be on the other line taking down in shorthand everything you said; I thought my memory was pretty good, but I realized that I didn't have total recall. I think it all started then. And of course you've got to remember it was all the period of McCarthyism too. I'm still haunted by that period, it was to me one of the most frightening periods in our history. McCarthy was just a no-good [expletive], a bum, and a liar—I don't have enough adjectives and adverbs to describe him. So I can't remember when I started thinking about it seriously.

We had a couple of incidents in our office, and we had the one that Darrell made reference to, but some point along the line it started dawning on me—and now it's gotten so bad—but when you start adding up all the people in this town that are involved in what you would call spying, or looking into intelligence activity, and you can start with the National Security Agency, they must have twenty-five thousand people out there. Even back then with the state of the art they could do broadband sweeps and pick up any telephone conversation with their computers, and do voice identification. Then you add to that the Central Intelligence Agency. Then you add to that all the service intelligence agencies, the State Department, the IRS, the FBI, you go down the whole list. I swear, you must have a couple of hundred thousand people in this town who are eavesdropping on people's activities, and they're mainly domestic. That doesn't count the embassies and the lobbyists and all the other things. I always went on the assumption, even back in the '50s, that there were no private conversations. If you wanted to have any you better make sure you're outside somewhere, and even that wasn't safe. Someone was listening to your conversation, if you were in any position of power.

I think where it also bothered me a lot was when you started seeing—and I really noticed it with the various branches of the service—when they started their liaison offices up here on the Hill. Probably one of the best lobbying groups of all was the Air Force lobbying activities that started under General Kelly, I think that was his name. This was during interservice rivalries, and they really were lobbying groups. They were supposedly constituent services, and providing information, and being helpful to senators. That even bothered the hell out me, mainly because each branch was doing this, but the Air Force was particularly good at it in the late '50s. They were getting a sizeable chunk of everything. But all three services were doing it.

There was a reserve outfit up here called the 99-99th. I don't know whether you ever heard about that reserve unit up here on the Senate side. What it was, they were AAs, and members even, that put in their reserve duty by fat assignments, going on trips, or over to the Pentagon, or somewhere else. I know I was offered by the Air Force, I had an ROTC commission out of the University of Arizona, but I had one of the last contracts. I was in the last class that had a five-year contract. Then they had the Universal Military Training Act, which made you two of active and six in reserve, a total of eight years I guess it was. I fell in that gap where I only signed up for five

years. I was offered a majority, and here I'm a young kid. What it was, they used the 99-99th as part of their lobbying activity. You also had Naval Reservists. You had members, and then they became spokesmen for that particular service. I always felt, and still do, because I turned that down, that anyone who worked on the Hill, particularly a member, should not still maintain their active reserve status. If they are an elected official, they've got to look at the whole picture and not just that particular service. But they all ended up being lobbyists for their particular service.

So, with that background, my own feeling was that there was, particularly by the Agency, the CIA, there was really penetration on the Hill, of not only subverting staff members that were professional staff members on the committee, you know, the "need to know" and all this other stuff. For instance, when you take the Church Committee, after everything blew up and they had the so-called Church Committee that was supposedly looking into all the clandestine operations of the Agency, well, half the people on the damn staff came out of the Company. I suspected that we had in our own office someone who was leaking information to some of their liaison people. I know we did on the committee.

Also in Carl Hayden's office we had a very difficult situation that developed where one of the senator's staff men, who was being handled by one of the Eastern bloc's top intelligence people. He would go to the embassy a lot and things like that. Not that he—I don't think that he knew that they were using him, but it's like everything else when you know what the big picture is in the puzzle, every little bit of information you get helps. We had a very difficult time because the senator and Mrs. Hayden were very fond of this man, and it was one of those things that you couldn't talk about particularly. We were approached by the FBI with what they had—and this is again where you knew that a lot of conversations were being listened to, because they had his conversations with this particular espionage agent, who supposedly at that time was one of the best in the Eastern bloc. You know they had conversations with him from our office, in the park, all over. Obviously, they were following the agent and just happened to pick up this individual. And the type of information, he didn't have access to any top secret information that I was aware of, but I think we got him a clearance at one time. I used to have the FBI run a clearance on everyone who used to work for the senator, particularly the men. But that became a difficult thing.

I remember sitting down with Senator [B. Everett] Jordan, who was chairman of the Rules Committee, because the FBI recommended that we take him out of any sensitive area, but they didn't want us to let him know that they had all this information. It really devastated the senator personally. He was very upset about it. I tried to work out a situation where I found him a very good lobbying job that was located out of town, but he turned it down, so instead we had a meeting—Senator Jordan, who was then chairman of the Rules Committee—the senator, and this assistant director and I, the four of us had a meeting about the situation—and we decided to move him to a position over in the Senate, where he was totally out of the loop of anything, and put him in a patronage position at a decent salary. I subsequently got criticized because he blamed it on me that I saw him as some sort of a threat to my position, and it hurt me politically back home, because he was very popular back home.

So between other governments and our own, you just knew that a lot of things were going on, even starting back with Allen Dulles and those people. Probably when they first set it up, I guess it was 1946 when they set up the Central Intelligence Agency, after the war, you had some men over there that originally, though they came out of World War II spy business, but they did trust members of Congress. And of course, Carl Hayden sat on the CIA watchdog committee, the informal one that I mentioned before. Notices of meetings would come to the office, but nothing was ever printed in the paper. But they sure in hell had meetings—and regularly. In many ways, [Richard] Russell controlled that committee, which was made up of sets of the Appropriations and Armed Services chairmen and ranking members. He probably dominated it all during that time. But the senator had the most closed mouth of anyone I ever met when it came to stuff like that. But they trusted some of those men early on. Now, when some of the professionals came along later, they'd only tell you what they wanted you to know. Unless you were really asking penetrating questions, there was no real oversight of what the hell they were doing.

Subsequently I had some experience with people "trying to come in out of the cold." They would have too much information, a lot of times, about what was going on up here. There was no way that they should have known some of the things that were going on, unless they had someone really telling them, or they had someone up here. I remember going once through the list of every major law firm in this town, trying to find someone that you could trust that wasn't connected in some way or didn't have

an alumnus of the Company or some other spy agency, and I couldn't find one, you know, senior partner who didn't come out of that group. They permeated the whole damn town. When I was trying to help this one senior official in the CIA come in out of the cold we just couldn't find anyone that he could go to that it wouldn't get back.

And I had some experiences of my own, with someone who used to come by our offices a lot, and with whom I subsequently officed with for awhile when I left the Hill. It was the strangest [expletive] operation I ever saw. He had a beautiful suite downtown, traveling all over the world, no files. You wondered what the hell was going on there. At the time it was great for me, but then later I found out, because I discussed some things with him about this other situation, asked him for advice about what I should do, because I respected the guy and had known him since the '50s. We were having lunch one day in the Mayflower, and he dropped some stuff that there was no way he could have known had he not also been working for the Company and been one of their front people, involving this individual, because he didn't get it from me, and he said something. From that moment on he knew that I knew that he had made a mistake. Either my face showed it, or something, but our relationship changed immediately from then on. I haven't seen too much of him since.

The thing that Darrell made reference to was more they were afraid of foreign intelligence, but at the same time, I didn't put it past our own people. There's no doubt in my mind that bugs were placed around here. It has always bothered me that our own government has engaged in that sort of thing. I guess you've got to keep in mind that there's only person you really elect in the entire executive branch, and that's the president of the United States. This is your last bastion, the legislative branch, the Congress, to keep the bastards honest, anywhere. So I guess what I mean is when you put all this together, between every department that developed a lobbying operation during the '50s and the '60s, all under the guise of liaison, but most of them were really lobbying, arms, or that particular governmental agency or department. And then you saw, as people left the Hill, some of the senior staff people left the Hill, and members who went to law firms, I've seen too many of my Democratic friends that went downtown to become lobbyists who have all of a sudden adopted the philosophy of conservative of the corporations or organizations they represent. I guess that's just human nature.

It's still the most frightening thing to me, because now with all the electronic sophistication that takes place, who knows what's going on? I don't for instance trust the telephone company. Where before you needed bugs, now you can do it right in the telephone banks downtown. And of course there isn't a telephone conversation that doesn't at some point go over the airways, and with NSA and all their wonderful equipment worldwide they can pick up any damn thing they want. It's scary, and I think it's difficult for members to believe that all the things that are going on, are going on.

I know when Hale Boggs was whip of the House, he was concerned about a lot of the eavesdropping that was taking place about him. And there's some question in that area. I know Tommy Boggs and I have had a number of conversations about it, about ten years ago, of what the Agency and the Bureau were doing, eavesdropping on Hale Boggs. But for instance—some of this laps over after I left the Hill—I know, or I'm pretty confident, I should say, I'm almost certain that during Watergate the CIA was running a call girl ring over at the Columbia Plaza. [Deleted] was one of the girls involved in that little operation, before she married [deleted]. And then you'd wonder who was operating this, when there was one right across the street from the new Senate Office Building, a cathouse. Those were mainly housewives over there, that needed extra money. The ones downtown at the Columbia Plaza were all young gals. When you get into that Watergate thing, a lot of things happened. There's no question that the military was spying on the White House. You had [Alexander] Haig involved in that, even Woodward was over there briefing, and Admiral Moyer, or whatever his name was. It's a known fact that they were stealing things out of garbage cans and everything else. It was a whole damn military operation.

And of course, information is power, and everyone wants that around this place. So I guess what I meant by saying the other day, I think it's one of the most serious problems that an elected official in the Congress faces. How do they handle and protect themselves in carrying on the nation's business? And I think the best thing is probably public exposure to all this.

See, our government lies so damn much. It's hard to find something you can believe is the truth. If they stumble over it they go on as if nothing happened—the truth I mean. And of course the excuse, like around here now, all the security that you have

up here in the Senate and in the Capitol. I was talking to Bob Dunphy, the former sergeant at arms, and a lot of it is unnecessary and overdone. But all you have to do to frighten these guys is to say there's been a threat. I'm not so sure that American citizens shouldn't have a right to threaten [laughs]. But it just seems to me that there is a secret government at work, and has been, and it's been used. What used to bother me, take all the coups. You'd get the party line from the State Department, and you'd be out there as a politician—I remember when I was running, I was mouthing what I thought was straight information from the departments, and the next thing you know, we were behind the [expletive] coup in some country, and you look like a damn [expletive] because you've been out there saying what a great thing we're doing for democracy and all that. And here we've helped to overthrow the government.

I remember Iran when Mossedegh was overthrown. Now we find out that our government staged that whole thing. That's where you get irritated, where I think there's a real weakness in the whole democratic process. There wasn't enough oversight, and these guys are rogues. They're running around making American foreign policy and domestic policy. Christ, it's known that the CIA had one of their major offices down in New Orleans. What the hell, they're doing more spying on American citizens than the guys in foreign intelligence. Then of course, there's always been the jealousies between all the agencies, Immigration Service and Treasury—I forgot to mention them, they're another bunch—and Drug and Alcohol. I don't know how many now we have on the War on Drugs, but the last count I had there must be eighty-nine agencies involved in supposedly fighting the War on Drugs. Anyhow.

**RITCHIE:** In that context, back in the '50s, a committee like Appropriations would often use staff from other agencies, from GAO, from IRS, from FBI. Didn't that put some of those people in a position of questionable loyalty? Supposedly they were there on limited terms, but many of them stayed.

**ELSON:** And a lot of them came up during the war, during the '40s, but certainly during the '50s. That's how Tom Scott, for instance, on the Senate Appropriations Committee came. He was chief clerk. Carl Hayden got him his first job. He's one of the few individuals that I've ever met who started out in government as a GS-1, right out of high school in Douglas, Arizona. He came back here and went to the Bureau. He was on loan from the FBI, for instance, and a lot of them from

GAO. They'd bring them up that way. But after a while they really became professional staff members, and they were fulltime, and the staffs were smaller then. I don't think that that posed a problem at that time, because they finally converted them fulltime to the Senate staff.

I know Carl Hayden resisted for a long, long time, fought the expansion of the staff. Maggie [Warren Magnuson] wanted to put a person on. They all thought they had a right to put a person on, and the senator kept the staff down quite low. But in those days I don't think that really posed a problem. These were more specialists in budgetary matters. For instance, a lot of person who worked the bills had been a budget officer say down in the Department of Interior. So they were more technocrats than they were policy makers in that sense. They knew the budget process and the appropriations process well. But now, with every member having the right to have a staff member on the committee, that's certainly a change. I don't know whether the members or the committees are better served that way, because as I've said before the proliferation of staff is something that concerns me. But to answer to your question, I don't think at that time it caused any real conflict. As they expanded some of it, I think in some cases, as they stayed on longer, some of the staff members started identifying more with the people they were working with than I think they did with the members.

**RITCHIE:** What do you mean, "the people they were working with?"

**ELSON:** The departments whose bills they were handling, like if it was Treasury or Post Office, they became sometimes more advocates for the departments than they were overseers of the process. But all in all, and I'm speaking mainly of the Appropriations Committee, I thought that during that period they did an incredible job. I think they could probably have done a lot better in defense. You never had enough clerks to handle that, to look into the weapons systems and really make the type of judgments that were necessary. And you found all the company lobbyists of the military-industrial relationship—getting back to the spying bit—because you knew when some lobbyist from one of the major defense contractors came in, Christ the day before already the military had come in with their pitch to you, seeing if you could get the senator to stick something in, and what a great weapons system this was. You knew damn well there was a lot of coordination going on between who would hit whom. And

there was always competition for the contracts among the states, since it was the growing industry. Eisenhower did warn us about all that. Now that peace has broken out, they sure as hell don't know what to do, do they? But this whole maze of intelligence gathering is really frightening to me, and I could see a situation where you could really have a "Big Brother" in this country. All you need is a charismatic leader and some scare and the "Seven Days in May" could happen.

**RITCHIE:** You talked a little bit about the Appropriations Committee, and of course the dollar and cents are the bottom line on everything. I was curious about Senator Hayden of that committee. He was chairman from '55 to '69.

**ELSON:** Yeah, and actually before that, because [Kenneth] McKellar, his predecessor, he came over in '27 too but got sworn in a few days ahead of the senator. In McKellar's last days he was not functioning too well, so the senator really was running the committee.

**RITCHIE:** He was somewhat senile?

**ELSON:** Yeah, and Senator Hayden was running the committee for a few years prior to his actually becoming the chairman. He was chairman of it except for that brief period when the Republicans controlled the Senate. What was that, the 84th Congress?

**RITCHIE:** The 83rd.

**ELSON:** 83rd Congress. And he was chairman up until he left.

**RITCHIE:** How did Carl Hayden operate? How would you describe him as chairman of that committee, and how he proceeded?

**ELSON:** I think he was a great chairman, and anyone who served with him would verify that. He moved things along pretty rapidly. He let members have their say, I mean, he wasn't any tyrant, but he at the same time could cut things off and move them along. He was sort of an ideal chairman, in my opinion. Where he was at his really best was when there was a mark-up, or in conference, because he was one of

the great traders, in knowing how to compromise. He knew the process so well, and the rules, that there are a lot of people who have said, "He mumbled more billions through the Senate than anyone in history." I thought he was a very fair chairman.

He would do things—for instance, Allen Ellender never did care for the foreign aid program too much. He'd make all these trips and make a big report to the Senate every time he'd come back, and take thousands of photographs, and all that. Well, when that class of '58 came in, Gale McGee went on the Appropriations Committee. The senator took Gale aside privately, and he said, "While you're on this committee, every place that Allen Ellender goes, you go. You follow along behind him, different trip, but see the same things, so that when this comes up in the committee, when there's something we've got to discuss, I'm going to turn to you and say, 'Gee, Gale, weren't you over there, too? What's your view?'" Well, he'd do things like that.

Now, he was a big believer in foreign travel for members, to see the world and what was going on, and for staff members. He didn't travel that much, but he did after Mrs. Hayden died, for instance, I talked him into once going to the Paris Air Show. I should tell you about that, because we ended up going to Pope John XXIII's funeral. Did I mention that?

**RITCHIE:** No.

**ELSON:** Remind me to come back to that, because it's an interesting story. But he really encouraged members of his committee to travel, to go and see first hand how the dollars were spent. And the staff, during the recesses, they were always traveling, looking at things. Just the same way, we did it when we went home. You went out there and you visited all the installations, all the projects, so you knew before you got back here pretty much all the problems.

Where Carl Hayden was also very good in running the committee, and in handling things, he was really good at putting in, and getting members to put in to build up the record for their project, to justify it, to have the studies made, looking down the line. There was never a rush job that way. A lot of people, particularly as he got older and his hearing went bad, thought he was getting senile. There was nothing senile about Carl Hayden. You'd think he was up there asleep, and then he'd ask the most

penetrating questions. He'd cut all the [expletive] out and get right to the heart of the matter. He was superb at doing that. I mean, people would marvel. I can't tell you how many witnesses I've seen just stutter and stammer and couldn't answer the question. Then he'd send them back to the drawing boards to come up with a good explanation.

He pretty much let the subcommittee chairmen handle their bill, bringing it out and putting it to the full committee. He always liked going to the floor with as many of the full Appropriations Committee supporting whatever the bill was. They went over it pretty damn carefully. They did it in subcommittee in mark-up, and then in the full committee. But when they hit the floor it was rare for them ever to get knocked over on anything, or any money knocked out. And it was always under the president's budget estimates, except in time of war.

**RITCHIE:** In the '50s, before the changes in the Democratic party's idea about putting members in, most of the members of that committee were chairmen of other committees. . . .

**ELSON:** Oh, yeah. It was an elite committee, even on the Republican side. You name all the powers in the Senate, they were all there. What I know did bother Carl Hayden, and it started in the '50s and really bothered him in the '60s, was the backdoor route to spending, you know, the authorizations that other committees were doing over Appropriations, the lending authority and all the other stuff. That really bothered him because things were starting to get out of hand. When they couldn't justify it on an annual basis, they'd come up with some sort of new lending arrangement, or bonds, or other ways to get around the financing of these projects. He was concerned because he saw the budget process was getting out of hand.

I remember during the Johnson administration, all the manipulation they did with figures to try to keep the budget under a hundred billion dollars. Remember? [laughs] You know, that wasn't that long ago, and now look at it! I know that disturbed him, starting in the late '50s and early '60s, it concerned him a great deal. But as a chairman, I think everyone respected him, mainly because even the members who weren't on the committee could go to him and say, "Carl, I've got this little project," and he'd tell them what to do, and he'd never forget. Somehow, it may not be exactly what

they wanted, but there would be something in there to start that project, particularly the capital investments. He was a big believer in capital investments in this country.

But, yeah, you're right, until they made the changes in the late '50s on the Democratic side, they were *all* powers.

**RITCHIE:** When you've got Richard Russell, who was chairman of the Armed Services Committee, as chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, did Hayden just turn that over to Russell?

**ELSON:** No, because he served on that subcommittee too. Of course, he was ex officio member of any, but he himself was an active member on the Defense Appropriation Subcommittee. But he and Russell were so close, they saw eye to eye on practically everything that was going on. But, yeah, you could go down the line. On the Republican side you had [Leverett] Saltonstall, and he'd be ranking member on . . .

**RITCHIE:** Armed Services.

**ELSON:** Yeah. It was almost like a ruffle in a bridge game, they could just run it through. So that's why they were able to go to the floor, and I think that's also why it was possible, for instance, for Lyndon as leader having only one and two vote majorities to put together a lot of things that he did, because of this club that was so powerful and intertwined. It was almost like an interlocking directory. So, yeah, when I look back and think of some of the people who served on the committee, like Ellender, who was chairman of Agriculture, and Lister Hill was Labor and Human Resources, or whatever we called it then, and Stennis, he was on Armed Services too, they were all wonderful.

**RITCHIE:** Sure, John McClellan, Warren Magnuson, they were all chairmen of other committees. It's remarkable.

**ELSON:** Let's see, the only person who was on it who wasn't a chairman I think was [J. William] Fulbright.

**RITCHIE:** Until 1959—but he had been chairman of the Banking Committee, actually, before Foreign Relations.

**ELSON:** Right. Well, I think that's what made the Senate work so well. They brought a lot of expertise from their committees to the appropriation process. But as I said, I know the one area that he was concerned with was when the committees like Banking and others, particularly in Banking, they were doing housing and other stuff where the government was getting big obligations.

**RITCHIE:** Now, this was in the days before there was a budget committee.

**ELSON:** Oh, yeah.

**RITCHIE:** So they were the budget committee as well as the Appropriations Committee.

**ELSON:** Exactly. And so that's why when the chairmen of the other committees brought something there, there was some continuity that you could see what they were authorizing, and had an overall picture, but it was always pretty loose. Now, of course, over on the House side, that's the only committee you served on if you were on the Appropriations Committee over there, so they got to be really experts. When you went to conference, the House was always better prepared than the Senate, because they worked harder at it, and had more members to work on it, and also more staff. And of course, they started all of them. You remember the fight between [Clarence] Cannon and Hayden? [laughs]

**RITCHIE:** I was going to ask you about that famous fight in 1962. What was the story behind that?

**ELSON:** Well, I remember Tom Scott and Bill Woodruff and a bunch of them were always having meetings on it. Everyone knows that revenue legislation is supposed to start, constitutionally, in the House of Representatives. Well, appropriations are not necessarily revenue, but by tradition it's always gone that way. It really got bad where the House was getting bills over later and later, because there would be all the changes from downtown, and everything, and they started not getting

bills over, so the Senate decided that it needed to move the thing along in a more orderly fashion, so you could get the major appropriation bills—what were they then, ten or twelve, thirteen? My recollection is that's how it started. And then it got out of hand because you had some very powerful members over there who took umbrage. And then the press sort of made it into a big issue, these two old men in their wheelchairs at thirty paces—I remember Herblock's cartoon in the *Post*. I know that Tom Scott, and Bill Woodruff, and the senator all wrote up a very good report, I must have it somewhere, in defense of the position the Senate had taken. All the legal experts were arguing the merits of who could start it. Then I'm trying to remember how it all came to an end, it ended about as fast as it started, or faster, when they finally broke the logjam.

**RITCHIE:** Part of it was agreeing where to meet.

**ELSON:** Well, yeah, that got to be an issue, but it was really much more than that. It was really the rights of the Senate to originate if they want to.

**RITCHIE:** But they still don't originate.

**ELSON:** No.

**RITCHIE:** They tried.

**ELSON:** They tried, and I think they made their point. It certainly after that accelerated. But the issue of where they were going to meet, that focused press attention. It was much bigger than where they were going to sit down and have a conference, but that's what the press made a lot out of.

**RITCHIE:** I gather that Clarence Cannon was a very different type of person than Carl Hayden, the way he ran that committee.

**ELSON:** Yeah, he had a mean streak in him. He sort of ran it with a strong hand, and didn't give his subcommittee chairmen as much leeway as certainly Carl Hayden did over here. Carl Hayden was a gentle but firm man. He was fearless and fair, tremendously fair in everything. I know I tried so hard, particularly during our

fight in getting the Central Arizona Project authorized to get him to be a lot meaner, and take shortcuts and make threats, but he never would.

But Cannon and Hayden got along well together. I didn't get to go to that many conferences, but man they could move things along and get things done in a hurry. I'm not sure that some of the members knew what was going on. They'd sit down ahead of time, pretty much, and staffs would, and see where there were going to be differences, and work them out. Even all the subcommittee chairmen from the House highly respected Hayden. Mike Kirwin, for instance, from Ohio, he loved the old man. This goes way back to when the senator tried to help him when he wanted to build that canal, and got him some money for the studies, and supported him. I know during the Central Arizona fight, when we were really taking a hard line against Wayne Aspinall, we went over, John Rhodes and Carl Hayden and I met with Mike Kirwin one day, and Mike Kirwin was going to turn on his own House members to support Carl Hayden on this issue. It was one of the most memorable little meetings I ever attended as long as I was around here. There was a lot of good rapport between the House and Senate appropriations committees under his leadership. I'm sure if you talked to Tommy Scott and some of those people they'd agree. Tom Scott, for instance, he took all the minutes. He took super shorthand, and he sat in them during all that time. But from my viewpoint, as his AA, I just marveled at the way he remembered things, had things done, kept all these things moving, and knew what was in every appropriations bill, and read every report that was filed. It was remarkable.

**RITCHIE:** What was the situation of being an AA to a senator who was also chairman of a committee? What's the relationship between a senator's office and the committee staff? And where is the line drawn?

**ELSON:** Well, with my predecessors, like Paul Eaton was my predecessor who later went over to the Appropriations Committee and handled the Interior bill, he pretty much stayed out of anything in the appropriations process unless it involved an Arizona project. We sort of were involved in that. And occasionally on some airline matters, like local carrier subsidies and stuff like that because of the relationships, but I think most of my predecessors stayed out of that lot. When I took over, I don't know why, but I seemed to get involved more than any of my predecessors. Part of it could have been as the senator got older he relied on me more for following-up on things.

And then more people were coming in to see me, because they knew I probably was more susceptible to their pleas to make to the chairman directly rather than going through some of the Appropriations staff.

Then, I must admit, also maybe in the early '60s, sometimes you get the feeling when you're on the firing line of the constituents and all the lobbyists and everything else that sometimes the professional staff on the committee forgot how they got there in the first place. Politics is still part of the legislative game, and that's what it's all about, and you're responding to that. I felt, not too often, but on some occasions that they were hiding behind their so-called professionalism and weren't responding to what really the chairman wanted, or the chairman had met with another member of the committee and they both wanted, the staff were dragging their feet and wouldn't get it done.

But Tom Scott and I got along extremely well. Most of the people on the committee were responsive, but every once in a while we'd have some arguments. I always knew that I had the last shot and the first shot at the senator, so on one or two occasions I made my point and won a couple of minor skirmishes with the committee staff, so in some ways some of them were concerned about me, that I might have too much influence over the chairman. But I felt that they weren't responding as quickly as they should. If I told you more, I'd have to name names. But for the most part I think it's very difficult for an AA when his boss is chairman of a committee, because the professional staff resent your interfering with their "professionalism," and they think you ought to stick to your own business and they'll take care of committee business. But of course you had smaller staffs then, sometimes you had to rely on them just for getting out correspondence and stuff like that when you're inundated, and most of the time we could talk out anything.

And then sometimes committee staff would want to get into your affairs, particularly if the committee staff member might be from your own state, that the chairman might have put over there. I know that's happened, not only in my case but also in others, where I've been told by other AAs where the senator has had someone on the committee staff from home and they've had some real heated political fights. It didn't happen that often, but I know in my case that I had one showdown with a professional staff member on the Appropriations Committee, well, two, but one in

particular. I made sure I won that battle, because he was getting into political affairs that I was responsible for in Arizona. I just wasn't going to let that happen.

Where I always felt I had strength with Carl Hayden—although in the later years I think he treated me more like a son he didn't have, but it was never articulated—but in the early years he tested me every way you could be tested, I think, and then he got to rely on me. I also found you could become very powerful if you're willing, after you've gotten all the facts together you can possibly get together, but if I had one strength it was I wasn't afraid to make a decision. I knew if I screwed up, or if I made the wrong decision, I expected to get fired, that day, you know, clean your desk and you're gone. So you did better work that way. You were really on your toes, though I don't know that it ever happened that way, but I sort of viewed it that way. I was always willing in a showdown, after I got into an argument, to say: "Let's go talk to the senator." Let him resolve this, if we couldn't agree on a policy matter or political matter. I found out that there were very few people around here who were willing to do that, because everyone has a weakness. They're afraid of losing their job, and they have family, all those things. As I think I mentioned maybe in our first interview, I was always pretty good at spotting where people were vulnerable. So I never hesitated to say that, and I don't think ever—I don't care whether it was a lobbyist or whoever—did they ever challenge me.

Oh, I had people always going around me, going over to the Methodist Building, even cabinet members going to see the senator over in the Methodist Building, telling him what a bastard I was because I wouldn't do this or that. And the senator would come over with a twinkle in his eye the next morning and say, "Guess who visited me last night?" [laughs] But I don't think anyone ever challenged me, they would all back off. I would say, "Well, if you really believe what you say you believe, because I disagree totally, and this is why, so let's go and let the senator decide, because I'm sure as hell not the senator and I don't think he wants to do what you're talking about." I don't think once in all those years did anyone ever challenge me. I challenged them on occasion, but they never really wanted to have a showdown. There was always a backing off. It's sort of interesting that way. But I had so much confidence in the senator, and I think he did in me, that I wasn't doing this willy-nilly or frivolously, because he wanted to hear all sides of the story.

I remember early on we were about to put in a bill that was really to scare the hell out of some people, because it was in the common carrier area, and of course we weren't on any of those committees, but we were still going to do it. We had discussed doing this, and we were about to put it in. This was what was so remarkable about him. He said, "Did you check how this might affect. . ." and he named two other groups. I said, "No, what would they have to do with?" And then he told me what they had to do with it. So I went back and checked, and we finally put it in, but not before he made me go check the rest of the facts. I gather it came from this long service and seeing it grow. He did not often surprise people, I mean do something behind their back. I don't know of anything he ever tried to do behind their back, it was always up front. They knew it was coming.

**RITCHIE:** Well, he didn't have to, given what his position was. There really wasn't a greater position of authority.

**ELSON:** And I think the combination of not only the position but the respect that he built up over the years, and his own integrity just added to that. So he didn't have to do things behind your back. I never heard him talk ill of too many members. I heard him talk about a few that he really disliked. Like [Herman] Welker, he didn't care much for Welker, and then he thought John Williams was a pantywaist, or his ideas of saving money were a little foolish. He did not like [Joseph] McCarthy—I think he might have felt as strongly as I did. But rarely did I ever hear him say anything bad about a member. If he felt those sort of things for the most part, he kept them to himself. As I said, he never forgot if a member asked him for help. He went out of his way to help other members, like the whole time he was held up, when we were in the Supreme Court on *Arizona v. California*, tied up for ten years, he helped California build half their reclamation projects in the Central Valley and you name it all. He was a builder, so members could rely on the fact that they were going to get a fair shake with him. And the [expletive] never forgot. If they'd corner him on the elevator, or it could be some little person with a little patronage problem, you know, someone needed a job, he'd come back and remember it.

**RITCHIE:** Did he remember slights as well? I mean, somebody who didn't support him, or voted against his projects?

**ELSON:** Oh, yeah, but I guess this goes back to his early career. Christ, as soon as the election was over, sometimes I thought we were doing more for his enemies or the people who opposed him than we did for the people who supported him. He always went out of his way to go see the man, and made him a friend. Those who held opposite views he went out of his way to bring them around. It was rare for him to hold slights or feel slights, he was bigger than that. Well, he would remember when people would try to do political things to him, but he was not vengeful like I wanted him to be. I tried to get him to cut some people off.

Did I tell you the story about early in the Kennedy administration when we had the guy who was assistant secretary of Agriculture lie to us? This assistant secretary was in charge of the local agriculture stabilization committees, or whatever they were. We had some people we wanted named to some of these, and he had promised he would, and we had commitments. I practically had it in writing, and then he reneged. Of course, this gets into another area where we had difficulties with then Secretary [of Interior Stewart] Udall, because he had become a cabinet member and he thought he was going to control all of that, because he had gotten the Arizona delegation to go for Kennedy in 1960. This would be in 1961, early on, and the guy's name was Dr. [James T.] Ralph. He eventually got into trouble anyhow, and I think eventually went to jail. But I had him dead to rights. I remember, because we were having difficulties with the White House on some patronage things, I wanted to string this guy up, because I found him lying, I had a tape, I had all sorts of stuff.

As I mentioned before, the best time to talk to the senator about sensitive problems or anything political was on Saturday or Sunday. I at that time lived right on Capitol Hill, so I was here practically as much as he was. I took this up with him this one Saturday. He had me outline the facts, and I went through it and told him what I wanted to do. He said, "Well, let me think about it." So, next week would come. This went on for two or three weeks. Finally, it was getting that if we were going to do anything about it, a decision had to be made one way or the other. [laughs] I still laugh when I think about it. I went in on this Saturday morning and he's sitting there smoking his corncob pipe, I sat across the desk from him, and I said, "Senator, I hate to bring this up again, but if you don't make a decision today, I wouldn't have time to put what I recommend what we do into action, because I need at least three days and we've got to do something by next Wednesday." He said, "Go over it again." I thought,

"Oh, Jesus," I went over it for about the fourth time, laying out the pros, the cons, what he had done, what I wanted to do, and then I made my recommendation. He puffed on his pipe awhile and after a long pause he said, "Okay, do it." Man, I closed my folder, I jumped up, and I was almost at the door to go into my office, right next to his, and he said, "Oh, Roy, by the way, you do realize, of course, if this doesn't work, I'm still going to be a United States senator." [laughs] I nearly broke up. I said, "Boy, do I understand that, yes sir!" [laughs] Now, how the hell did I get onto that?

**RITCHIE:** One other question about the '50s I wanted to ask about was Hayden's relationship with press. I was looking at a statistic about national news coverage around 1960, and it listed senators who appeared on the news broadcasts, or in the headlines, and Carl Hayden was almost last on the list of all the senators.

**ELSON:** Oh, yeah.

**RITCHIE:** Despite all of the influence and the power that he had in the Senate. How do you account for that? And was he closer to the Arizona press than he was to the national press? What was his relationship to the press?

**ELSON:** Well, he had no hesitancy, for instance, when they reported a bill out of Appropriations he'd tell them what they did, but he wouldn't speculate on what was going to happen on the floor. He'd never get into that game of predicting events. Until I came along he never had a press secretary. The way we handled at home, if something was a project we would wire them, not an official press release at all. He used to, for instance, send all the newspapers in Arizona free Congressional Records and send them the Congressional Directory and that sort of stuff, and then in turn they'd always send him copies of their papers, which he read. Around Washington, it always bothered me all during the '50s, when Goldwater came back in '53, he'd have worked on a project for years and Goldwater's office would get the advance notice from the Eisenhower administration. I remember Dean Burch [Goldwater's AA] used to call down to get the details of how this all came about. The senator would say, "Don't worry about it, the people who really count know who did the work. It doesn't really bother me." I know it bothered a lot of his staff people that he wouldn't take credit or blow his own horn the way he should have.

Then again when we had that Class of '58, man they knew how to use the press, but the senator just never courted the press. He was friendly with all of them. He would occasionally go up to the press gallery and things like that, but it was always amazing to me when he'd get a call from a reporter how little print or ink ever followed that conversation. He just never, until I convinced him in 1961, when we did a political survey that showed that forty percent of the people in Arizona didn't even know who Carl Hayden was, because of the growth of the state, and because he had not handled the press or the new media, television. The Arizona press, the *Arizona Republic* and *Gazette*, they had an office here in Washington, so they did cover his activities a little more. But still not that much. Barry was the one that was always getting the ink. He was more quotable. I finally talked the senator into getting some press people, and we started working at it a little bit, leading up until his '62 campaign.

That was one of the more unusual campaigns, I'm very proud of that one, because I really ran that one. He never went back to the state. In the last ten days of the election he was out at Bethesda [Naval Hospital] and we had to set up a meeting with Vice President Johnson and Dick Russell to prove that he was alive. I was being accused that he was really on ice and we were waiting until after the election for my political purposes. It was an interesting campaign. He was in the state, I think, four days that year. And of course, that was during the Cuban Missile Crisis, in October. It was an exciting time, a very interesting campaign.

**RITCHIE:** I want to talk about Arizona politics, but I thought we'd save that for next week. But before we wrap this up, you raised the question about Barry Goldwater. I was curious, in the 1950s, what was the relationship between Hayden's office and Goldwater's office?

**ELSON:** Oh, we always got along well. Of course you've got to remember that Barry's father and the senator were good friends, and he'd known Barry since he was a little boy. They were old pioneer Arizonans. He had known him forever. He thought his politics were a little crazy, but he liked Barry, and of course Barry loved Carl Hayden. He was one of the two men at the senator's funeral who eulogized him, Lyndon being the other one. There was always a good relationship, that wasn't particularly partisan.

Barry, for instance, when people would come back here, though there was a Republican administration, constituents would come in thinking here was this new big power, and he would say, "I can't do anything for you, but go down and see Carl, he's the one that will get it done." So Barry had the best of all worlds. He could say anything, he didn't have to work at it, because he knew Carl Hayden was going to do the job. And sure enough, he did. And that used to irritate the hell out of me and some of the others. But Barry made no bones about it. I mean, he'd publicly tell people, "Go see Carl Hayden." So they'd come marching down. Of course, they would do that anyhow, for the most part, but he didn't hesitate shifting the burden to Carl Hayden's office. Of course, when it came time for the press release to come out, they were very good at it, very good at it.

**RITCHIE:** He was in a situation of standing for small government everywhere else except for Arizona.

**ELSON:** Oh, yeah, [laughs]. See, that's what I've been saying. From World War II, and in the '50s up through the '60s, if it hadn't been for the federal government, Arizona wouldn't exist. It would still be desert. If it wasn't for the federal reclamation projects, Phoenix would still be a town of fifteen thousand wondering where in hell they were going to get their next drink. And all the air bases—I could go through that state and pretty much tell you how Carl Hayden built it, whether it's from mining to agriculture to highways to Indians to military bases, all these sort of things. And here we were lapping at the public trough, just wallowing in it, and then all of a sudden we did it all by ourselves, this rugged individualism. Man, we stand up strong and for small government, and as long as we have our hand in the pocket no one sees it. And all the new people coming in, they believed those myths.

That's another thing that bothers me about today's world, particularly with television, how we can believe in some of the myths. You get criticized for being critical of your government about some actions that they took that were really outrageous—you know, you're not patriotic. But Arizona, if there was any state in the union, I don't know of another one that got more from the federal government. Per capita, I would say Arizona had to rape the United States Treasury more than any other state in the Union. Good or bad, Carl Hayden was pretty much responsible for all that. But Barry knew the trend of the people coming into the state, and had a good feel for this

mythology, and played it like a maestro. It was wonderful to watch, but it sure in hell annoyed me.

The relationship between the two men was very warm, but Carl Hayden made no bones about saying that Barry's politics were a little shallow and not very consistent with anything. But that didn't keep them from being friends, their whole lives. When I ran against Barry, and against [Paul] Fannin, you know we had made the original plans in '63 and '64 to run against Barry, when I ran. But even in '68 the senator didn't hesitate to support me, because he liked my version of politics better than Barry's. He would not engage in anything nasty against any opponent really. So they had a good relationship.

**RITCHIE:** Well, I really do want to ask a lot of questions about Arizona politics, especially that '62 election, so I think this would be a good breaking point.

**ELSON:** This is a good time to stop.

**End of Interview #5**